

to the public who are watching us as we begin to draw our attention now to something that has been ailing our economy, and that is a discussion of unemployment. It is about time, Members, that we start addressing this issue. When we left this House almost a month ago, we forgot about the 800,000 workers that right after Christmas were given a Christmas gift: they were given no unemployment insurance. Their families are suffering. We are here today now to talk about what we can do to improve upon that.

In the State that I represent, one of the largest, California, we saw well over 1.3 million people out of work. This recession that hit our area began in March of 2001. We need to help all workers, especially families.

This past month, I had the opportunity to visit several of our shelters and food pantries and saw something that was very surprising, children now, small children, 3 and 2 years old and infants, women that just lost their jobs that have no place to go and no food. They are not asking for just a handout. They are asking for jobs. They are asking for also a replenishment of their unemployment insurance. We have a chance now to extend that to 26 weeks.

Let us support the Democratic alternative. I plan to do that today.

#### CALLING FOR PERMANENT REPEAL OF THE DEATH TAX

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, our Nation's economy is lagging behind the needed economic recovery that we all seek. Just yesterday President Bush announced a sensible economic growth package that will grow our economy and create jobs for the American people. The President also again called upon Congress to permanently repeal the unfair death tax. As we all know, the 10-year sunset provision on the tax relief bill passed in 2001 has added a level of anxiety and uncertainty into our already complicated Tax Code. The current sunset has made estate planning as unpredictable as our own inevitable fate.

Also, Mr. Speaker, as unemployment levels continue to rise, it is important to note that, according to the Heritage Foundation, just the repeal of the death tax will help to create an additional 145,000 jobs. In turn, the U.S. economy could produce \$11 billion per year in extra output. So not only is the elimination of the death tax fair, it just makes common economic sense.

Mr. Speaker, our President has again asked Congress to do the right thing, and I urge my colleagues to act now to permanently eliminate the death tax.

#### RECOGNIZING 50 YEARS OF TIRE- LESS WORK FOR WEST VIRGINIA BY SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

(Mr. RAHALL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 50th anniversary of West Virginia's senior Senator's service to the people of West Virginia in the United States Congress. It was Winston Churchill who perhaps best foresaw the defining nature of the tenure of Senator ROBERT BYRD's tireless work on behalf of the State of West Virginia, our Nation, the House and the Senate and, of course, our Federal Constitution. Churchill said, "Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts."

Senator BYRD has seen success. He has never lost an election. But ROBERT C. BYRD does not measure success by personal standards, but by the public good. He does not seek success, only to serve. And through his service, West Virginians have prospered, America has been strengthened, the Congress has been ennobled, and the Constitution secured. Failure has been rare and momentary but always used as a catapult to advance the next charge for the cause of the day.

It is common to celebrate milestones in our Nation's capital, Mr. Speaker; but tenure no matter the length is temporary. What matters, what measures the man, Mr. Speaker, is not the number of terms but the depth of his determination, not the years but the heights of his horizons and not one more sunrise but the courage of his convictions.

By this measure, Mr. Speaker, ROBERT C. BYRD's record can never be outdone.

#### PRaising PRESIDENT BUSH'S INITIATIVES ON MISSILE DEFENSE

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, President George W. Bush made history when he announced to the world on December 17, 2002, that America would deploy a national missile defense shield to protect our country. My friend and mentor, the late Congressman Floyd Spence, continually warned us about the urgency of having a missile defense system in place to protect the homeland. President Bush has demonstrated tremendous leadership by taking action to work with our allies to create such a system inspired by Ronald Reagan.

As my colleague and chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), recently stated, "The case for deploying a national missile defense system has never been more clear. Today, the United States cannot stop a single ballistic missile headed for an American city."

I wholeheartedly agree, and I believe Congress should work in a bipartisan fashion to successfully implement a missile defense shield that will protect the American people and our allies.

#### EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT BEN- EFITS SHOULD BE FIRST PRI- ORITY

(Mr. HONDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, last November, President Bush and the Republican leadership turned their backs on over 1 million Americans. Despite repeated efforts by Democrats, President Bush and the Republican leadership refused to pass legislation that would have prevented unemployment benefits from expiring on December 28. Due to their inaction, over 800,000 Americans faced a holiday season full of uncertainty. I repeat, President Bush and the Republican leadership allowed over 800,000 Americans to lose their unemployment benefits on December 28. Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. In my district of Santa Clara County alone, over 7,000 unemployed workers were cut off from their benefits, and an additional 13,000 unemployed workers will lose their benefits if Congress does not act now.

Mr. Speaker, 1.5 million Americans have lost their jobs since President Bush took office. Congress cannot continue to callously ignore their needs. I call on the Bush administration and the Republican leadership to make the extension of unemployment benefits the first priority of the 108th Congress.

#### EMERGENCY AGRICULTURAL DIS- ASTER ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2003

(Mr. BURNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURNS. Mr. Speaker, farmers of the 12th District of Georgia, as well as those across the Nation, are hurting. Disastrous yields and poor crop quality are the result of the weather of 2002. To respond to these needs, to work for Georgia farmers and with the Georgia Farm Bureau and its president, Wayne Dollar, today I will introduce the Emergency Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act. I urge my colleagues to take steps toward aiding some of America's finest in these difficult times by cosponsoring and supporting this bill.

#### INVITING MEMBERS TO JOIN CAU- CUS ON MISSING AND EX- PLOITED CHILDREN

(Mr. LAMPSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, we are all too familiar with the names Elizabeth Smart and Danielle Van Dam.